

LITERATURE.

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CHINESE. By Rev. Justus Doollittle, in two volumes. Harper & Brothers, New York; J. B. Lippincott & Co., Nos. 715 and 717 Market street, Agents.

A work executed in a style slightly Chinese in its character, and bearing as an impress some of those calligraphic phonetic signs which are the alphabet of China. Lays before us. It is copiously illustrated with appropriate engravings, and is printed in the clear typography which is insured by the stamp of the Harpers. So much for its exterior. Of the literary quality of the work we must speak highly. Written in a style which could be ceconomically termed too diffuse, it is nevertheless of great perspicuity, and, as a narrative, is spicy. It must be remembered by those who find fault with the author for giving two large volumes to the public, that if his production is large, so also is the field which he intends to cover. And no ground, however fallow, can be valuable unless much time be devoted to its preparation. Mr. Doollittle, at the outset, tells us that he intends to treat of a subject which has never before been appropriately handled; that a residence of fourteen years in the Celestial Empire has qualified him to speak understandingly. The contents of these volumes, we are also informed, were originally published in the China Mail, and, as usual, have reappeared in book form "at the earnest solicitation of numerous friends, on whose judgment the author relies." In the present instance, the judgment of the friends was correct, but this is an exception to the general rule. In the course of the work the author lays before the reader a perfect treasury of anecdote, incident, custom, usage, and superstitions. From the opening page to the last paragraph the interest is kept up, and the attention of the reader never for a minute allowed to flag. For this, however, the praise is but partially due to the writer, it is rather due to the ceaseless variety of the incident of which he treats, that we are indebted for so delightful a work. As an author, Mr. Doollittle possesses comparatively little merit, and it is as a compiler of facts that his chief claim to popularity resides. But between the writer and editor he has given to us a delightful work, discursively written, yet teeming with novelties, treating of subjects of which before we have heard but mere rumor, and drawing aside the veil of mystery which has so long enveloped the peculiarities of the Chinese. Considering that the citizens of China form the largest and, in point of age, the most civilized nation of the globe, it is a strange fact that so little has been laid before the Christian public which reveals their true peculiarities. The work of Mr. Doollittle does much towards placing them in their proper light, and redeems their character from a reputation which confounds them with the Buddhists of the Ganges or the child-slayers of India. As an instance of the subjects treated of, we will quote the passage relative to the causes of the sickness, which may be of value to our doctors when spring arrives:—

They endeavor to expel various deadly influences proceeding from evil spirits.—Should any one who has had general good health be suddenly and mysteriously taken with dizziness in the head, pain in his eyes, or with inability to use his hands or feet as usual, his illness is not unfrequently ascribed to the influence emanating from some one of seventy-two malignant spirits or gods. Immediate measures must be taken to counteract or expel this evil influence. A table is placed in the lightest part of the room in which the sick man is. On it are arranged three cups of wine, a plaster having on it five kinds of fruit, and a conser and a pair of candlesticks. A quantity of mock-money is also procured, ready for burning. A Taoist priest is hired to recite the proper formulas, in order to secure the expelling of this evil influence from the sick man. Sometimes he invokes the aid of a certain headless demon in this important work. The priest provides himself with a small bell, which he rings while he repeats his formulas; and with a bowl of water which he sprinkles with snaps with his fingers on the articles ordered, and on the sick person. He has also a bundle of various kinds of paper charms ready for use when needed, and a small stick of wood, with which he strikes the table at intervals during the recitation of his formulas. The incense and candles are burning all this while, and at the proper time he sets the mock-money on fire. About the close of the performance he produces three paper charms, one of which is to be sunk up over the door of the room, another is to be worn on the person of the sick, if it be a man, or on her head, if it be a woman; and the third is to be burnt, and its ashes, mingled with hot water, are to be drunk by the sick one. Sometimes one of these charms is suspended on the curtain of the bed on which the afflicted person sleeps, according to the directions of the officiating priest. He is supposed to know which of the different methods of using the charms should be practiced in any given case. In case the priest is successful in expelling the malignant influence at an early period, medicine is rarely used in restoring the disabled individual to health. When the evil influence is removed, the person will soon regain his usual degree of health, as a matter of course.

In their monetary transactions a great deal of ridicule has been cast upon the Chinese. For the benefit of our brokers, we quote the curious and lucrative system of "money-lending clubs without interest":—

It often occurs that an individual desires to have a certain sum of ready money to use, but which he finds himself unable to command. Instead of borrowing the sum, and paying the exorbitant interest demanded by money-lenders, and instead of trying to raise the sum among his friends as a gift or as a temporary loan, he endeavors to induce them to form one of several kinds of clubs, the immediate object of which is to furnish him with the desired amount, but the future effects of which will be to supply the same sum to each one of its members, without the usual heavy interest.

He induces a trusty friend to become second or assistant, he being his head or principal. Having prepared a number of red envelopes, each containing a small sum of money, he calls upon his relatives and friends who are able to engage in the club, and who he desires should enter it, explains to them his plans, states the amount he wishes to raise, each member's share, and all needed particulars. Those who are willing to engage in the club receive one of these envelopes as a kind of bargain-money, and after that they may not withdraw without his consent, or unless he fails to secure the required number of names. They are recorded by the customs officer as bound or pledged to perform their part in the contemplated union. In case of not succeeding in obtaining the requisite number of responsible names, the undertaking falls through.

Many friends and relatives are willing to engage in a club to assist in a person when they would not contribute to give the needed sum to him, and many are willing to try and form a union professedly for their benefit, when they would not receive money as a gift, and when they would be ashamed to have their friends contribute money for their use.

The Shaking Club.—This club is thus named from the frequent tossing of dice by its members. The number of members is not fixed, varying from five to twenty or more. Suppose the sum to be raised is 100,000 cash, and the number of members is ten, each man's share will be 10,000 cash. Suppose the time for the payment of the shares is quarterly, there being ten payments, it will require two years

and a half before the business of the club will be perfected. The business is all managed by the head man and his assistant, and the meetings of the club are held at the house of the former, or at the place he appoints. He is at the expense of a feast for the members of the club the first time they meet, it being the time when he receives the sum of 100,000 cash, including the sum which he is supposed to pay in, though really he does not provide it, but only receives 90,000 from the other members. At this first meeting no dice are thrown, it being well understood that the sum is to be taken by the head man.

At the next meeting each member brings his 10,000 cash, which is given to the one who, on casting the dice, gets the highest number of spots, the head man and his assistant not engaging in the casting of dice, the latter according to the rules generally adopted, taking his 100,000 cash at the third meeting of the club, without any appeal to the dice.

At the fourth and every subsequent meeting, those who have not drawn the sum throw the dice, according to the rules of the club, to decide who shall take the 100,000 cash. All who have previously drawn the sum, excepting the head man and his assistant, at any meeting of the club are expected to contribute a small sum for the incidental expenses, as paper and refreshments. If anything is left unexpended, at the close of the tenth meeting, it is considered as belonging to the man who has waited into the club, in case of positive dishonesty in this manner, provided each man fulfills his pledges, each man will have paid into the club 100,000 cash, and each have received back the same amount. While his payments will have been small, and his interest in the sum received will have been at one time.

The principal drawback against this method of raising money is the great uncertainty of every man's fulfilling his part according to the by-laws of the club. These are, in general, such as regards terms of payment, number of members, and amount of each instalment, at the time he gets it up. Sickness, misfortune, or death may prevent the payments of some of the members at the stipulated times. Such cases cause much trouble to the head man and others who have received their allotted money, who are held responsible by the other members. When the club breaks down in consequence of the inability of some members to pay in the sums agreed upon, those who have received money must return in small sums and at intervals, if they cannot pay at once, the amount received over and above the sum they have paid into the club. In case of positive dishonesty on the part of one of its members, the head man is considered bound to make up the sum he ought to have paid. Each man, on receiving the sum paid in at one meeting, must give a document, with the names of two men as his security, one a member of the club and one not a member, pledging himself to the proper fulfillment of his responsibilities in the case. Probably few cases of downright dishonesty occur in connection with these clubs, because the members are generally mutual and firm friends of each other, and especially of the head man.

Sometimes a club is got up among friends for comparatively very small sums, as in shares of two, four, or six dollars. Poor men who cannot raise the sum desired at once, but who can save enough to make a payment every quarter, or oftener, sometimes engage in such clubs. In all cases, whether for large or small sums, whether the number of members be few or many, or whether the intervals between payments be monthly or quarterly, the same principle is kept in view, the obtaining of a round sum of money for use without the payment of interest, to be refunded in instalments at intervals.

The Snake-eating Club.—This union or club is so called from the circumstance that the head man, the one for whose benefit the money is subscribed, pays it back to the members by regular instalments, as may be agreed on when formed, just as it is said, the snake sheds or casts its skin gradually, or at regulated intervals. There is no need of an assistant in the working of this club. The members subscribe and pay money, but once. There is no division of this money among them; the head man takes it all for his own use when it is paid in, which is done at his first and only meeting. At this time he prepares a feast for his members. The money he then receives he agrees to refund to the subscribers at it at regular intervals, by uniform instalments, in the order decided on by the drawing of lots or by the throwing of dice, the time of its being paid in. Each member must wait until his turn arrives for receiving back the money he subscribed.

The Dragon-headed Club.—This club is named "dragon-headed" because the first payments made by its members are much larger than subsequent ones. It is so named, it is said, in the Chinese dragon, in the circumstance that its head is much larger than its body. The number of shares, times of payment, etc., are arranged by the head man at the time he solicits the names of his members. Suppose the number of members is twenty, including the head man, and the first payment is 10,000 cash on the part of all but the head man, who advances nothing, but receives all that is paid in, the amount is 190,000 cash. In case the meetings are held quarterly, every three months after the first meeting the head man pays into the club 10,000 cash, and each one of the other members pays in 1000 cash, making, in all, 20,000 cash. It is understood by the members that the meetings shall be paid in. In this manner, in five years from the commencement, the head man will have paid into the club 190,000 cash, the amount he received at its first meeting, and each of the other members will have paid in 20,000 cash, and have received back the same amount. The proportion between the first and succeeding payments agreed upon by the parties concerned, of course, will be the rule for any club.

The whole work abounds in these brief, telling incidents. From the extract made, the exceeding prolixity of the style will be perceived, yet with this defect, and it is a most serious one, we must give the writer credit for having succeeded in giving us a most original and entertaining work on a new and heretofore obscure topic.

HALF A MILLION OF MONEY. A Novel, by Amelia B. Edwards. Harper & Brother, J. B. Lippincott & Co., Nos. 715 and 717 Market street, Agents.

Of all the semi-sensational novelists of our day, Miss Edwards has won the least dubious reputation. Mrs. Wood is simply ridiculous in her portrayal of character, and although of deep interest to the lovers of the horrible, to the seekers after blood-stains, and the admirers of double-mated women, yet viewed in the light of discriminate criticism, can be only termed "ridiculous." Miss Braddon is a step higher, describing persons who, if one should live a few centuries, and be on intimate terms with half mankind, he could probably discover some of the traits of her heroines. But Miss Edwards is a really talented and absorbing writer. Her reputation was made from the moment that her *chef d'œuvre*, "Barbara's History," appeared, and it will not be diminished by "Half a Million of Money." The rapidity with which the ever-working machines, called the brain of authoresses, can manufacture works, excites admiration. "Miss Carey," an inferior little offspring of a random moment, was laid upon our table but three weeks since, and here we see another of nearly two hundred pages. That one is a serial concluded, does not lessen the wonder. The present work is founded on the ratiocinations of a law-suit, a will, testators without number, and all the delicious paraphernalia of a large inheritance. The tale is interesting from the commencement. The first chapter contains the will. Now what novel lover does not glory and glow over a will? What visions of grandeur and intricacy of plot and counterplot arise before his mind when a good sized

will is faithfully transcribed on the pages of a well-printed novel! To commence with a dying testament is to advertise for the reader's interest, and Miss Edwards has secured an unlimited answer to her card of invitation. The style of all this authoress's works is similar, and we have previously commented upon it in full. It is pleasing, yet oftentimes too flowery. When we are told that after a series of exertions the parties all come out right in the end, all the villains are separated into two bands, one being transported and the other hung, that all the good things of life are given to the good, we say all that is necessary to secure a fair notice of "Half a Million of Money."

CORA BELMONT, OR, THE SINCERE LOVER. T. B. Peterson & Brothers, No. 396 Chesnut street.

To those who have a chronic dislike for the sensational we would not recommend "Cora Belmont." While the interest of the work is undoubted, and the plot most delightfully absorbing, it is a fair sample of what can be appropriately termed a "sensational novel." It is full of incident, and verities the motto that true love never runs smooth. In fact, in the present case, it terminates in a cascade. But we must not betray the secrets of the book. To those also who read all of Messrs. Peterson's novels, and there is a very large class who do, we recommend "Cora Belmont." It is neither above nor below the ordinary run of such works. Told without skill, yet maintaining its interest because of its plot. But to such a stand steadfast on the ground of real merit, pass "Cora Belmont" by. The publishers have issued much better works, and if they would maintain the claims of their uniform editions to literary excellence, they must in the future issue a far, far higher style of literature than the work before us.

A LIGHT AND DARK CHRISTMAS. By Mrs. Henry Wood. T. B. Peterson & Brothers, No. 396 Chesnut street.

A neat little volume of the latest and, we think, the best of Mrs. Wood's productions is laid before us. It is short, a great merit; and it is absorbing while it continues. As a Christmas story it has few superiors, and should be read by all who admire Mrs. Wood's style.

MOZAIKS OF HUMAN LIFE. By Mrs. E. A. Thurston. J. B. Lippincott & Co.

From the title it might be construed that the topographically perfect work before us is an original production of Mrs. Thurston. It is, however, merely a compilation of all that other writers have done, said, or thought on the subject of betrothal, wedded life, babyhood, youth, single life, and old age. Under these subdivisions we have two generations of humanity traced out, and little extracts given to console either babyhood or old age. The design of the work is not very clear, but the selections are good. We see all our old favorites given an appropriate place, and the real worth contained in "Mosaics" is sufficient to counterbalance the vagueness of tendency and make it a desirable companion.

We had occasion, a few days since, in speaking of the poems of a Mr. Gay H. Naramore, to utter certain strictures on his style and taste, what we said was spoken in good faith, and with no design to excite the ire of any one. Mr. Naramore has seen fit, however, to take offence of his time, undoubtedly precious, to send us his card, writing on the back of it:—

"To the Editor of the Evening Telegraph, "With the 'superlative' compliments of "G. H. NARAMORE."

At the risk of advertising the author, we quote in full his business card, as we are not favored with any other.

G. H. NARAMORE, IMPORTER, AND MANUFACTURER'S AGENT FOR BUTON AND CLOTHS' TRIMMING, 103 CHAMBERS STREET, NEW YORK.

In that spirit of kindness that has prompted all we uttered on this work we will add a little advice. Abandon the Muse, and enter with all your heart into the sale of buttons. Buttons will pay; the Muses, as they are dressed by Mr. Naramore's fancy, never will. Therefore stand by buttons. But if the Groves of Parnassus must be entered, then devote the sweetness of your numbers to a congenial subject. Paraphrase the "Song of the Shirt," pen a "Rhyme on Ribbons," or astound us with an epic on *trimmings*. On such a subject the author would be at home, and would never be so merciless as to have an earthquake swallow up another lover while in her betrothed's embrace, and yet leave him safe. If they had only been buttoned together, then a much better termination of the tragedy would have been afforded.

A rumor is current that the monotony of the Sunday edition of the *Press* is to be broken by the addition of a Billiard column, under the sole management of Mr. John Forney, Jr. We have cause to doubt the story, as Mr. Forney recognizes the necessity of the exclusive attention demanded by such an undertaking, and is understood to be unwilling to entirely abandon his connection with the news department. For to manage two departments would be unto him a mental impossibility.

Foreign Literature.

A cheap edition of Sam Slick's "Season Ticket" has been published at two shillings.

Mr. Martin Tupper has prepared a selection from his works, which is published by Messrs. Moxon & Co.

Miss Eyre, the traveller in the south of France and over the Pyrenees, is sister of Governor Eyre.

The author of "Lady Flavia" and "Lord Lynn's Wife" has in the press "Major Peter," a new novel.

Miss Bennett's translation of "The Life and Letters of Bethoven," by Dr. Nohl, is in the press. The author, under whose sanction and revision it appears, is to participate in the profits.

Messrs. Macmillan & Co. are about to publish Mr. Baker's interesting narrative of his recent African explorations in the neighborhood of Lake Nyanza.

Mr. Graves, of Pall Mall, is trying to obtain an act of Parliament with a view of assimilating the English law to that of France for the protection of the copyright in prints and engravings.

A new literary "Year Book," on the plan of Ysereau, has been started by Professor Goswami, of Halle. It is divided into two principal parts:—the first containing popular essays on questions touching European literature; the second, a systematic and critical survey of all the literary events of the year.

St. Martin's Workhouse and Archbishop Tomlinson's Library and Schools have been purchased for the enlargement of the National Gallery, for the sum of £26,000. It would be desirable to remove the barracks at the same time, and then the whole space would be available for a grand national building.

The first number of "The Net Cast in Many Waters," a new missionary magazine, edited by Miss Annie Mackenzie, has just made its appearance. It contains some interesting particulars respecting the Unlaid Mission, and of the Zulu

land, the language of which is called by the editor "beautiful untranslatable Zulu."

In consequence of imperative orders from the Austrian Governor of Holocein, the long-established and world-renowned observatory at Arons will soon cease to exist. It is to be transferred to Kiel, and a commission has been appointed to superintend the removal of the observatory instruments and staff.

A portrait, said to be that of Shakespeare by a contemporary painter, is now in the possession of Dr. Clay, of Manchester. The painting, which is twenty-four inches by twenty, has, it appears, been in the possession of one family for upwards of one hundred years. The face is thoughtful and slightly touched with melancholy, the eyes being remarkably expressive and pleasing.

Messrs. Hurst Blackett announce for appearance in January, "A Noble Life," by the author of "John Halifax," in two volumes; the third and fourth volumes of the Hon. Grantley Berkeley's "Life and Recollections," completing the work; "The Life and Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart," including numerous original and unpublished documents, by Elizabeth Cooper, in two volumes; and "Falkner Lyle," a new novel, by Mr. Mark Lemon.

The lovers of Alfred Tennyson's verse and Gustave Doré's art—and they are legion—will rejoice to hear that he has undertaken to illustrate the "Idylls of the King." Mr. Doré is not sufficiently acquainted with our language to read this poem in the original; and we may, therefore, apprehend that the translation which is being prepared for him may fail to impress the artist with all the beauties and subtle meanings of that fine work; but if the translator executes his task well, there can be no doubt that the clever French illustrator will find abundant matter to inspire his prolific and wonderful pencil.

The Lancashire dialect is gradually obtaining a literature of its own. Messrs. Heywood & Son, of Manchester, issue two little brochures, "Uncle Oudem's Tales," and "Poems Suitable for Recitation," by the author of "Uncle Oudem," both in the Lancashire dialect. From an ode to the New Year we give a specimen:—

"May o' yo' yo' yo' good health be blast  
An' to the' day when o're laid down to rest,  
An' may yo' never hunger nor cold,  
May plenty be bind' o' yo' whoom,  
Whate'er may come or may go,  
An' may the new year 'at's just a' come  
Turn awt a good friend to yo' o'."

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Writing Desks, Inkstands, and Scotch Plaid Goods,

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will be sold low.

ISAAC TOWNSEND,

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285 quar. " M. B. "

210 " " " "

115 half " " "

607 quar. " " "

500 half seedless " " "

15,000 half boxes Valencia " " "

300 treble soft shell Almonds.

500 keps Malaga Grapes.

1000 half score Pigs.

481 boxes Lemons.

100 quarter cases Olive Oil.

100 quarter cases Olive Oil.

Imported and now landing from the barque La Plata.

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